

EDITORIAL/OPINION

South Africa:

Oregonian needs education

by Lanita Duke

Anti-apartheid individuals and organizations raised the consciousness of the public and the press during the latest assault against the brutality of South Africa as one more link to South Africa was broken — the resignation of Honorary South African Consul Calvin VanPelt.

Local anti-apartheid forces teamed up with a national movement which has seen South African consulates closed, picketed, South African goods boycotted and the growing acceptance of legislative supported divestment.

The bi-weekly civil disobedience that led to his resignation alerted Portlanders to the overt and covert support the City of Roses gave and still gives a country that judges its citizens on the basis of skin color. If you are white, then you're alright; if you're brown, stick around, and if you're Black, get back.

Portlanders Organized for Southern Africa Freedom, the Black United Front and the American Friend Service Committee did Portland a great service by removing a thorn from the City of Roses. The mere presence of a consul in Portland condoned the inhumanity and inequality suffered by Black South Africans who cannot even vote in their own country.

The Oregon Rainbow Organizing Committee forged onward with their mission as they added their colors in support of the protest. Thus, augmenting the collective efforts of those in the religious, civil and social change movements. Their persistence paid off as the masses began to question and sound off against apartheid, thereby moving Portland a little closer to being a progressive rather than a regressive city.

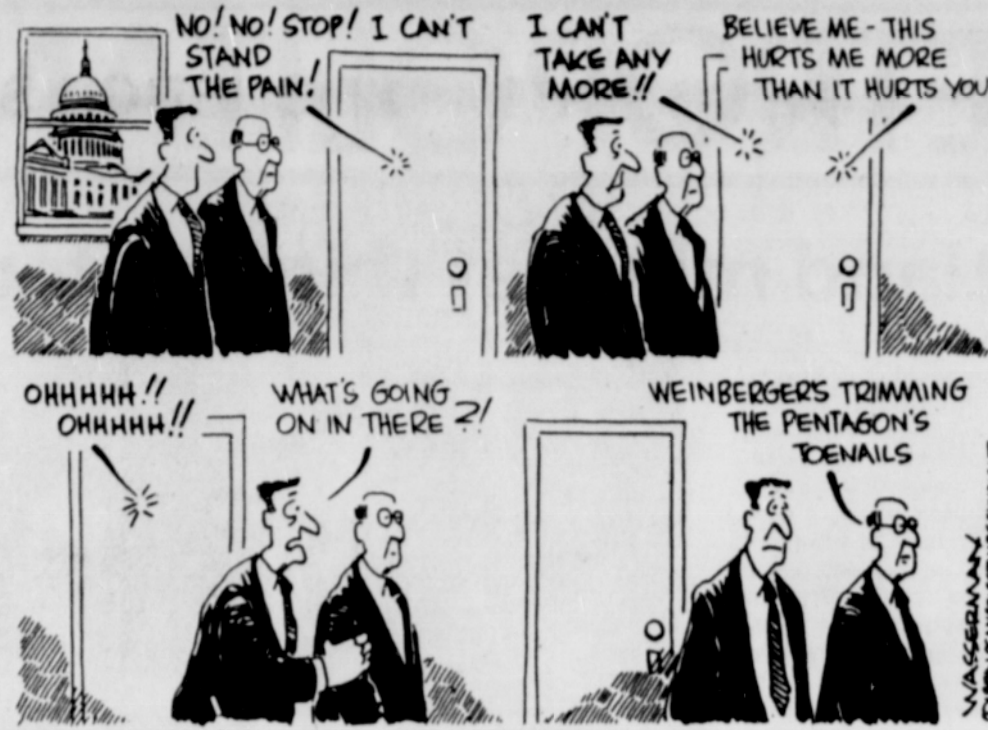


The absorption of information, sensitivity and consciousness ricocheted off the public to the press as the majority of major media outlets experienced some growth. This growth eluded the all-white male editorial board at *The Oregonian* newspaper as individual ignorance and racism found its way into a January 22nd editorial. A meeting between the Editorial Board and anti-apartheid representatives caused the editorial

writer to admit that he based his opinion on rumor, perception and misinformation. However, the damage was done as that editorial and their news coverage of the civil disobedience reinforced varying degrees of tolerance for the oppression of the majority Black by the minority whites.

Considering the apartheid conditions that exist in Portland — the Affirmative Action inactivity by the City of Portland, Metropolitan Service District and Multnomah County — the editorial writers remain conspicuously silent on issues that challenge the status quo.

Certainly, we hope this type of racism projected by the city's only daily newspaper will dissipate as the individuals responsible engage in some heavy soul-searching and accurate fact-finding. When the Editorial Board pick up their pens to write about issues pertaining to South Africa, they will be faced with an educated, sensitive public who called for the resignation of a South African consul in Portland, and will soon call for Oregon to divest our tax dollars away from racism, inhumanity and oppression. For this we owe the organizations who started the protest, individuals arrested and those who picketed our gratitude and support.



The crisis in Jamaica

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable



Last month's protests in Jamaica were widely reported in the American media, but poorly interpreted. Kingston, the capital city of 800,000, was paralyzed when conservative Prime Minister Edward Seaga ordered a 20 percent hike in the price of gasoline. Street demonstrations erupted spontaneously, and at least five people were killed by police. The immediate impact of the protests was felt by the tourist industry, as thousands of Americans cancelled hotel reservations and flights to Montego Bay and Jamaica's north coast resorts. In late January, teams of government functionaries and tourist bureau officials flew to Boston, New York, Chicago, and other U.S. and Canadian cities to reassure nervous travel agents. The officials brought slick slide shows depicting social stability on the island, and after plying the travel agents with rum and dinner invitations, status quo ante was restored. Little discussed were the root causes for the crisis in Jamaican politics and society.

Between 1972 and 1980, Jamaica was governed by the People's National Party (PNP), a social democratic formation led by Michael Manley. The U.S. was hostile to Manley's democratically elected government, and used various methods, from CIA covert intervention to pressure via the International Monetary Fund, to secure the PNP's defeat in 1980. Seaga's Jamaican Labor Party (MLP), which assumed office, remains one of the strongest clients of the Reagan administration in the Caribbean. Seaga was the region's chief defender

of the illegal U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983, and is a staunch opponent of both Cuba and Nicaragua.

Seaga's crude attempt to apply Reaganomics to the island has created chaos. In the past four years, food prices have soared by 300 percent. Unemployment rates have increased from 20 to about 35 percent. The country's international debt has increased from about \$1 billion under Manley's government to over \$3 billion during the MLP regime. Like his conservative patron, Seaga has responded to the economic crisis by initiating an austerity program, hitting low income and working people the hardest. Taxes have been increased on food and other essentials. The major blow has been the steady deterioration of the Jamaican dollar. Despite campaign promises never to devalue Jamaica's currency, the value of the Jamaican dollar has plummeted from \$2.20 to \$1.00 (U.S.) in mid-1983 to \$4.40 to \$1.00 as of this month.

During Reagan's invasion of Grenada, Seaga saw an opportunity to bail himself out of difficulty. Although he had pledged not to authorize new parliamentary elections until after the national voters' lists were updated, the Prime Minister called new elections, to take place in December, 1983. Simultaneously it started a vicious red-baiting campaign against PNP leaders, raising the absurd charge that a "Soviet-Cuban plot" had been hatched to "kill a senior officer" in the JLP government. The PNP and Manley condemned Seaga's moves,

observing that 100,000 Jamaicans still on the voters' lists had either died or migrated from the island since 1980. Another 120,000 young people who were eligible to vote were not registered. The potential for massive voter fraud, akin to the Democratic party machine in Chicago, would nullify democracy. Thus the PNP made the difficult yet correct decision not to contest the "bogus elections." The JLP naturally won all 60 parliamentary seats, although almost half of the normal JLP electorate did not even bother to vote. Seaga is in "command" of a government which has absolutely no legitimacy, and recent public opinion polls show a commanding lead of 18 percent of the PNP over the JLP, if elections were to occur now.

The real danger in Jamaica is that the Reagan administration and U.S. corporations invested in the island may authorize the destruction of parliamentary government and the initiation of an open dictatorship under their client Seaga. JLP National Security Minister Winston Spaulding has recently called for "preventive detention" measures which void civil liberties. Seaga has also blamed his recent troubles on "subversives." But as Manley has observed, the protesters have only "sent a message to the government loudly and clearly that they will no longer sit by and allow an arrogant and corrupt government to inflict unending economic pressures." No amount of tourist dollars will save Seaga from the opposition of Jamaica's people.

Letters to the Editor

The *Observer* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be typed or neatly printed and signed with the author's name and address (addresses are not published). We reserve the right to edit for length. Mail to: *Portland Observer*, P. O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

Door is open

To the Editor,

I'm writing in response to your article on Irvington School and institutional racism, published January 30. As co-ordinator for the Irvington Citizen's Advisory Committee, I was surprised to find out that we were listed as "unavailable for comment." It's hard to comment when nobody asks you a question.

I would like to offer a comment as an Irvington parent and as a member of the C.A.C. Parents who have come to our meetings throughout this year have affirmed again and again that multicultural education should be a priority at our school, as important as reading or mathematics. Parents have stated that for multicultural education to work, we need more minority teachers. At the same time we have continued to insist that class-

room aides are vitally important as a link between the community and the school, and that their number should not be cut.

I have been a parent at Irvington Schol for six years, and I believe that, thanks to a hardworking staff and concerned parents, multicultural education is a reality at our school. I hope more parents will join us in working to make it even better.

Irvington C.A.C. meetings are open to ALL Irvington parents. We meet at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. Childcare is provided. If you have a concern or a problem, PLEASE COME. You will be heard.

GENE BRADLEY

Racist justice

To the Editor,

On the front page of the *Oregonian*, Saturday Jan. 26, 1985, the big story appeared to be about the jury clearing Bernhard Goetz (new York Vigilante) in the shooting of four teenagers in the subway, but letting the gun charges remain for prosecution. This case has shown a complete bias (racism) on the part of the United States, where all callers, letters and

financial donors were on his (Goetz) behalf. The circumstances involved were Mr. Goetz was on a subway train. Four teenagers had screwdrivers in their pocket, NOT OUT, but IN their pocket. Two of the youth were shot in the back. Goetz left the scene of the crime. But the most important fact is that Goetz is White, and the teenagers were Black. Now I would like every straight-thinking individual to imagine if the same situation had taken place, but Goetz is Black and the teenagers were White. What would have been the decision of the jury? Life imprisonment? How much support would he have?

Teenagers have approached me several times asking for money; some had a knife on their belt and their friends would stand further away. If I had a gun, should I shoot them? The amount of money is meaningless to the fact, and I am sure there are other circumstances about Goetz that the public does not know. Yet the message is very clear to everyone about the lack of integrity and fairness in our judicial system when the crime involves different cultures or races, and this includes the general ideology of the majority population.

CHARLES FLAKE

Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard J. Brown

With the possibility of a mandatory seat-belt law in Oregon, the Street Beat team asked, "What is your reaction to buckling up or facing a fine?"



Ann Taylor
Housewife

"It's a good idea. It's for safety, so it should be the law."



Gail Hohman
Laborer

"It should be up to the person. I use safety belts because I decided to. I hope insurance companies do not raise our rates because of it."



Charles Rash
Warehouseman

"I don't think that is too cool. People might get in the car and forget to buckle up."



Louise Johnson
Consumer Service Rep.

"It sounds like a good idea. I never wear them, but if it becomes the law, I will."



Linda Madison
Unemployed

"No, I don't like that idea. I almost got killed with a safety belt on. I was in an accident and got hung up in my safety belt."



H. F. Taylor
Retired

"I started using a safety belt after driving a school bus. It would make a good law."

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